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SUBJECT: WHA/CAR DIRECTOR DE PIRRO VISITS TO GRENADA

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: WHA/CAR Director Velia De Pirro met with a range of local government officials and community leaders during her November 12-13 visit to Grenada. In her meetings, De Pirro reiterated continued U.S. engagement in the region and stressed the importance of demonstrating support for democracy and protection of human rights in upcoming country resolution votes at UNGA. De Pirro explained the current pilot program in three CARICOM countries to assist in the reintegration of deportees from the United States which, if additional resources become available, could be expanded to include other Caribbean nations. De Pirro visited the local Peace Corps office and met with Embassy Grenada local staff. She hosted a lunch that included OAS, university, media, and political representatives. At the lunch, De Pirro told the OAS resident representative the USG would consider his request for U.S. support for an election observer mission when Grenada next holds elections, expected within a year. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) Charge d'Affaires Karen Jo McIsaac accompanied Director De Pirro to all meetings except at the Peace Corps office.

St. George's University

¶3. (U) De Pirro met briefly with the Chancellor of St. George's University (SGU), Dr. Charles Modica and SGU's deans. The group described the university's evolution from an overseas medical school for American students to its current international student body, with scholarship students from around the world. . Veterinary medicine was added in 1998 and a nursing program will open in January 2008. . Modica expressed concern about the high number of Grenadians, who were issued visas to participate in a caregiver training program, but remained in the U.S. illegally. Note: Over half of the group either did not even start the training or did not return to Grenada at its conclusion. Modica promised to put in place measures to ensure compliance with visa conditions.

Grenadian Government Officials

¶4. (U) De Pirro held separate meetings with Minister of Foreign Affairs Elvin Nimrod and Prime Minister Keith Mitchell, but covered much the same ground in each. Both welcomed De Pirro to Grenada and thanked the United States for its \$46 million assistance program post-Hurricane Ivan in 2004, by far the largest contribution from any donor.

¶5. (SBU) Mitchell noted his understanding for the multiple demands faced by the United States in the world. He stated that the most significant help the U.S. could give is its support for Grenada, and other CARICOM countries, in the international financial institutions. De Pirro assured the PM and MFA that we are paying attention to the region, commenting that while it may not always be in the headlines, U.S. assistance continues to flow to the Caribbean countries. Both Nimrod and Mitchell welcomed De Pirro's assurance that WHA/CAR is following up on the June 2007 Conference on the Caribbean deliverables with

monthly meetings with CARICOM ambassadors.

¶16. (U) De Pirro explained the new program to help deportees from the U.S. re-assimilate into their home countries. The USG signed a memorandum of agreement with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and pilot program is starting up in Jamaica, Guyana, and The Bahamas with limited funding. Should the program prove successful, and additional funding become available, the program will be extended to other CARICOM countries.

¶17. (SBU) De Pirro pointed out the importance of supporting democracy and human rights and suggested that voting as a bloc often does not work well as the group's positions represent the lowest common denominator. She reminded Nimrod that the upcoming UNGA resolutions on Iran, Belarus, North Korea, and Burma are of great importance to the United States and asked that Grenada support them. Nimrod was unable to provide any information on Grenada's voting position for any of these resolutions. (COMMENT: In addition to being Minister for Foreign Affairs and Attorney General, Nimrod is the member of Parliament for the islands of Carriacou and Petit Martinique. Mitchell told McIsaac on November 8 that he has picked up more of the MFA duties so that Nimrod can spend more time in his constituency, as "foreign ministers do not win elections." END COMMENT)

Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition

¶18. (SBU) Opposition leader, National Democratic Congress (NDC) political leader, Tillman Thomas raised the issue of immigration to the U.S., saying he just returned from a trip to New York City and the recent debate over issuing driver's licenses to illegal immigrants is upsetting. De Pirro pointed out that the issue is divisive in the United States, with some believing that the group should have all rights and privileges and others

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believing that they should have none. (Embassy Comment: Thomas was reflecting a commonly held conviction here that Grenadians have a right to live in the United States, regardless of their visa status. Over 95% of first time passport applications received at Embassy Grenada are for children born to Grenadian women who deliberately went there to give birth. END COMMENT)

¶19. (U) Thomas noted NDC's concern about the Royal Grenadian Police Force (RGPF) inability to effectively combat drugs transiting Grenada, a direct result of a lack of a competent coast guard. De Pirro responded that it is easier for the United States to assist countries that build their capabilities. She added that the police need to maintain high standards; we can help with training, but less so on equipment. In fact, for institutions to work, a core professional staff is required that recognizes the chain of command.

¶10. (U) According to a recently released World Bank report, agriculture is still a primary instrument for poverty alleviation, which the NDC wants to focus on. Thomas said the party plans to develop a national export strategy for the production of herbs and spices, given Grenada's rich soil. Thomas indicated the NDC's interest in keeping people in rural areas focused on agriculture. De Pirro noted that while the government could provide incentives to promote farming, it should not force people to engage in farming or force them to remain in rural areas. She stressed that private initiative were key to economic development

Royal Grenadian Police Force

¶11. (SBU) Commissioner of Police (COP) Winston James explained that as Grenada has no military, the RGPF includes, in addition to the regular police force, immigration, customs, fire brigades, coast guard, a small paratroop unit (Special Services Unit or SSU) which incorporates a drug squad. The RGPF intends to increase the number of coast guard officers, as recommended by the United States, but the initial screening has caught a

number of officers engaged in illegal activity, so the process is moving more slowly than hoped. James said his key goal is to get training for the new coast guard officers, once they are in place. James stressed that Grenada shared the U.S. concern with narcotics trafficking through the region, particularly the flow of drugs through Venezuela. He noted, however, that without a viable coast guard Grenada was powerless to interdict traffickers in its own territory.

¶12. (U) De Pirro welcomed Grenada's cooperation with the United States on law enforcement issues and noted our continued engagement in the region. She asked the COP about the RGPF plans and needs. James asked specifically if ICITAP training is still available, since he has identified a need for training in forensic sciences and investigation. De Pirro responded that ICITAP has shifted its focus to other regions. James attributed crime in Grenada to local gangs and young men on drugs.
MCISAAC